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Making it work: 5 steps to social media success

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Your client has decided to invest in a social media plan. How do you ensure that it will work for them? Here are five steps to creating an effective strategy:

1. Know your audience.

Before planning your approach, study your potential and current audiences and how they use social media. Do they play games, register for contests, share content or connect with friends? Research their habits and determine the best way to interact with them.

What are target audiences saying about your brand? Find out where fans and critics express their opinions. This research will help you position your brand and effectively manage your social media messaging.

2. Identify your goals.

The most important question when developing a social media plan is, "why?" Determine your brand's marketing goal, whether it's building loyalty or advocacy, driving traffic to your website, creating relationships with the media, providing an avenue for customer service or attracting potential hires. Find your focus and stick to it. Changing the tone of your messages will confuse your audience and lead to a drop in followers.

3. Develop a social voice.

Social media is about relationships. Don't use these tools for a marketing message; use them to have conversations with people interested in your brand. Develop a voice and engage your audiences. By creating a solid brand presence on your social media platform, fans will know what to expect when they follow you. Be consistent and your following will grow.

4. Measure your performance.

Track your success according to your campaign's goals. Use monitoring tools such as Radian6 or Alterian SM2 to measure brand mentions over time.

Also measure your increase in following over time; and since social media is about building relationships, consider focusing on engagement metrics such as Likes, comments, feedback percentage (the percentage of social interactions/impressions) and retweets. Based on your goals, look to evaluate traffic to your site, click-throughs or coupon downloads.

5. Evaluate content.

The details of your social media plan may need occasional tweaking. Track the effectiveness of different approaches. Look at what times of day and what days of the week are generating the strongest response rate. Evaluate the type of content that is garnering the strongest engagement. Determine what's working and adjust your strategy based on performance.

Don't be afraid to ask your followers a question or collect their input on a new idea. Involving them in your brand strengthens the consumer relationship and builds loyalty.

Building a valuable social media presence takes time and dedication. By establishing the right expectations for your social media campaign upfront, you can create a foothold for your brand and connect with your key audiences.



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